

*March 1, 2011*

subject: Lincoln Avenue Plan  
to: Amherst DPW  
from: Lewis C. Mainzer

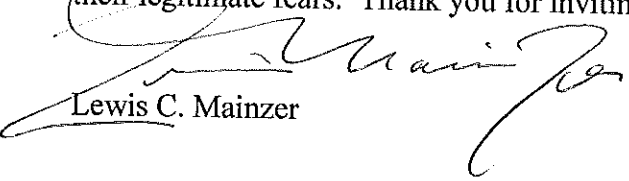
Concerning a Gazette article of Feb. 24, which invited comments on a Lincoln Avenue traffic project: I claim no expertise in such matters, but I write to support the installation on Lincoln Ave. of speed tables, rather than traffic barriers. (Speed limit signs may also be useful, but no substitute.) I have lived in a Lincoln Ave. house (two years) and just off Lincoln Ave. (more than fifty years), and I regularly have driven, cycled, and walked up and down Lincoln. I never have been persuaded that its historic character as a north-south, University-town center connection should be denied/disrupted. That it is not a rural or seldom used road is of course true, but it never has been in my experience.

Some years ago the Fearing Street-Lincoln Ave. intersection was the scene of too many auto accidents, and I wrote in the local paper strongly (in truth, melodramatically) urging a traffic light there as a matter of public safety. Wiser heads than mine responded but settled for 4-way stop signs as a solution, and this seems to have worked very well. A nicely pragmatic, undramatic analysis/solution.

Enough, then, of closing Lincoln Ave.—it is not a playground, it does require care in drivers/walkers/cyclists. Use of it is not free of danger (moving autos are intrinsically dangerous), but Lincoln is not a high-speed highway that one enters only at clear risk of life. Children should, of course, be taught how to cross the road—any road!—and that is a continuing responsibility of all of us who are parents. I once saw a young bicyclist hit by a car—a terrible thing—but that was on McClellan (an only moderately busy street), not Lincoln. And I personally worry about cars when I cycle on Lincoln. We all need to be careful if we live in a modern town center.

One safety action I would commend: the prompt, effective filling of potholes on Lincoln Ave. (and elsewhere, of course). Potholes are a grave menace to bicyclists because (a) you may hit one and be overthrown, or (b) you may swerve to avoid one and go into a car, or (c) a car, swerving to avoid one, may hit a bicyclist or pedestrian (walking in the road because the winter sidewalks are very badly kept by many of the homeowners). Perhaps experience does not confirm my fears in this matter, and I realize there must be money costs at stake—but deep potholes are no joke. Another service that contributes to bicyclists' safety is the spring sweeping of sand along the edges of Lincoln Ave. I knew a rider who injured himself from slipping on the sand, and I have tended to avoid the road until it is cleared. These and quite possibly other small actions can contribute to safety without causing major traffic disruption or shifting burdens from one street to another more politically quiescent one.

I respect the concern of my Lincoln Avenue friends for their comfort and safety, and I believe that speed tables may be an appropriate (at least partial, i.e. "taming") solution to their legitimate fears. Thank you for inviting expression of our views.

  
Lewis C. Mainzer